

## **CHAPTER 5 NATURAL RESOURCES**

This chapter draws heavily from the Interim Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Sandy Springs Mayor and City Council in June 2006. That document was based substantially on the inventory and assessment provided in the Focus Fulton 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Natural Resources Element. The information is summarized and reformatted to match the revised Local Planning Requirements. Historic and cultural resources are described in Chapter 6 of this Technical Appendix.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CRITERIA**

Environmental Planning Criteria were promulgated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources immediately following adoption of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The original set of criteria included water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and wetlands. Pursuant to the Mountain and River Corridor Protection Act of 1991, protected mountains and protected river corridors were added as components to the environmental planning criteria.

#### **Water Supply Watersheds**

The Chattahoochee River (Upper Chattahoochee River Basin) is designated as a large water supply watershed, since it has public drinking water intakes and is larger than 100 square miles. Adjacent to Sandy Springs, along the Chattahoochee near its confluence with Marsh Creek, the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority has a public drinking water intake. Public drinking water intakes also exist on the Chattahoochee River in South Fulton County, including the City of Atlanta, City of East Point and Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority.

The criteria for protection of large water supply watersheds do not specify buffers, impervious surface setbacks, or certain limitations on land uses, unless there is a water supply reservoir involved (which is not the case in Sandy Springs). Therefore, these criteria do not apply in Sandy Springs.

#### **Protected Rivers**

The Chattahoochee River meets the minimum flow requirements for designation as a “protected river,” but it is not subject to the Environmental Planning Criteria for Protected Rivers because the Metropolitan River Protection Act supersedes those provisions. The Chattahoochee Basin Watershed is also nominated as a Regionally Important Resource by the Atlanta Regional Commission in 1992 (ARC RDP Technical Report, Natural Resources).

#### **Groundwater Recharge Areas**

Although Fulton County contains seven significant groundwater recharge areas, only one is partially contained in Sandy Springs (in the northeastern section above DeKalb County).

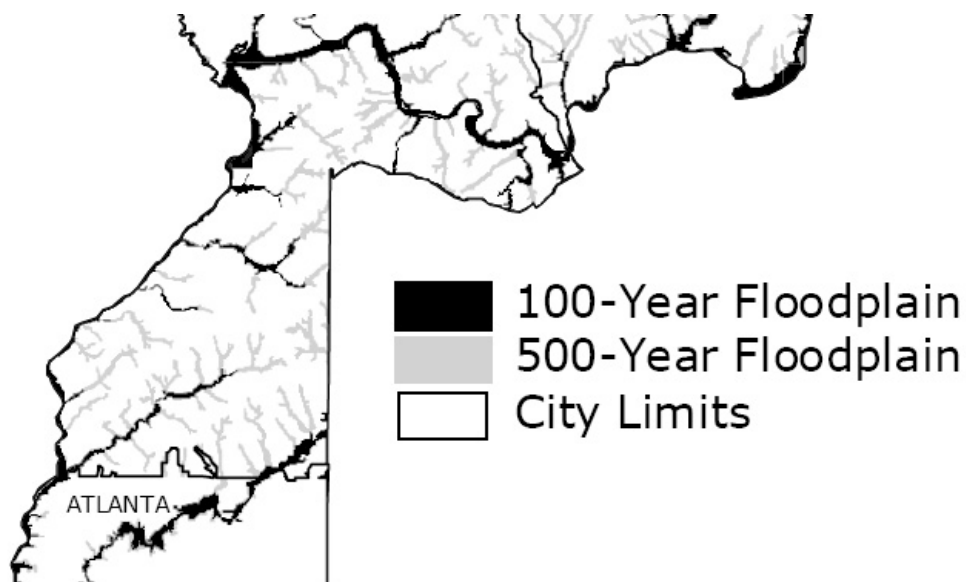
## Wetlands

Riverine wetlands are typically found along the Chattahoochee River, according to the Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan. The county plan shows the Chattahoochee River corridor as possible wetlands. Environmental Planning Criteria specify that local governments should acknowledge the importance of protecting wetlands in their land use planning efforts. Due to the Metropolitan River Protection Act, various stream buffer requirements, and national regulation of jurisdictional wetlands, adequate protection exists of any wetlands in Sandy Springs.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AND SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS

### Flood Plains

Sandy Springs has 100-year and 500-year flood plains as shown in Figure 5.1, including the Chattahoochee River, Sullivans Creek, Marsh Creek, Long Island Creek, and Nancy Creek. An ordinance regulating development within flood plains is required in order for property owners of a given local jurisdiction to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Only the 100-year flood plains are usually included in local flood plain management and flood damage prevention ordinances.



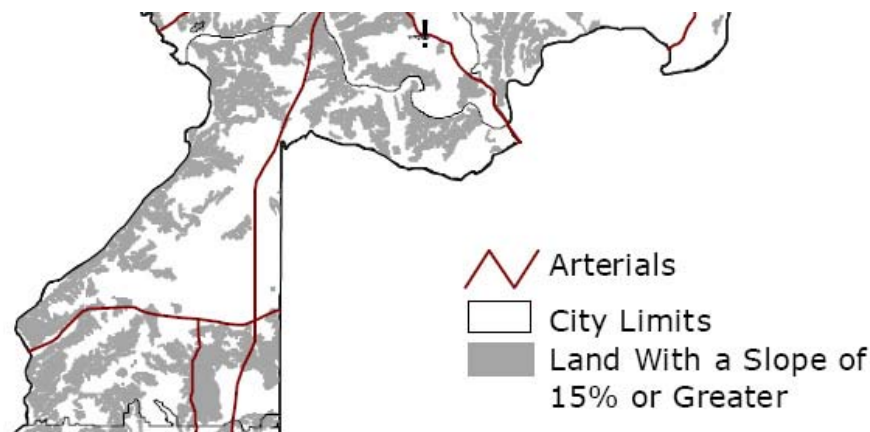
**Figure 5.1 Floodplains**

Source: Focus Fulton 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Natural Resources Element.

### Steep Slopes

In the Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan, steep slopes are defined as those areas with slopes of 25 percent or more, but the county's inventory shows slopes of 15 percent or more (see Figure 5.2 below). In Sandy Springs, grades of 15 percent or more are found primarily

along the banks of the Chattahoochee River. The interim comprehensive plan adopted by Sandy Springs indicates that “the City recognizes the importance of such natural features and will work to research and address these in future drafts of the Comprehensive Plan.” Hence, the issue of whether additional regulations are needed to address steep slopes should be considered in the community participation process and addressed, as appropriate, in the Community Agenda.



**Figure 5.2 Grades of 15 Percent or More**

Source: Focus Fulton 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Natural Resources Element.

### **Farm and Forest Lands**

Due to the urban and suburban nature of development in Sandy Springs, there are no significant agricultural resources remaining in the city. The existing land use map, produced as a part of the Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan, indicates there are significant forested lands remaining in the city, primarily within low-density, single-family neighborhoods. Sandy Springs includes the John Ripley Forbes Big Trees Forest Preserve, a 30-acre tract in the Morgan Falls area. Maintenance of forested character has been integrated into the citywide vision statement for Sandy Springs. Recently, the city has established a committee which is evaluating the tree protection ordinance of the city. The Community Agenda may need to reflect that committee's recommendations regarding amendments, if they are not accomplished by the time the Community Agenda is adopted.

### **Plant and Animal Habitats**

The Interim Comprehensive Plan for Sandy Springs, adopted in June 2006, indicates that, although current City of Sandy Springs policies, ordinances, and regulations address tree protection and coverage, there may be an additional need for plant and animal habitat protection. Plant and animal habitats are vulnerable to land development and are in danger of becoming permanently altered or completely lost because of sporadic land development in and around ecologically sensitive areas.

### **Major Parks, Recreation and Conservation Areas**

The National Park Service and the State of Georgia own approximately 705 acres of land in Sandy Springs, primarily the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area.

### **Scenic Views and Sites**

No significant scenic views or sites have been identified in Sandy Springs, via its interim comprehensive plan or in the Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan. However, the interim plan notes that further consideration should be given to the identification of such sites. The Visionary Character Area Map, submitted as a part of the Community Assessment Report, designates “gateways,” one of which includes the crossing of the Chattahoochee River at Johnson Ferry Road. That area, and any others identified during the community participation process, should be further considered for designation and/or protection in the Community Agenda.